



MEDIA RELEASE
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE
(MOTAC)

**MALAYSIA JOINS MULTINATIONAL NOMINATION OF ZAPIN TO
THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE
CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY**

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) proudly announces Malaysia's participation in a multinational bid to nominate ***Zapin*** for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Undertaken jointly with Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Singapore, this landmark nomination highlights a shared cultural heritage and the enduring bonds across maritime Southeast Asia. The official dossier will be submitted to UNESCO by **31 March 2027** for the 2028/2029 inscription cycle.

A Living Heritage of the Maritime World

Zapin is a dynamic living heritage that embodies identity, continuity, and cultural belonging among Malay and Muslim communities across the region. Far from a static tradition, it constantly evolves through intergenerational transmission, community participation, and local adaptation.

An inseparable synthesis of music, song, and dance, *Zapin* originated from the creative hybridization of the Hadhrami *Zafin* tradition with indigenous Southeast Asian practices. In Malaysia, this vibrant art form thrives through distinct regional variants like *Zapin*, *Jipin*, and *Jepin*, each celebrated through unique choreographic motifs inspired by local flora, fauna, and the natural environment.

The Spirit of "Zapin Ummah" and International Cooperation

This joint initiative stands as a testament to international cooperation, fostering dialogue and collaborative action across borders. It beautifully reflects the

concept of the **Zapin Ummah**, a transnational cultural community that transcends geographical and political boundaries. Through this shared endeavor, the region celebrates its deeply intertwined history and the enduring vitality of its diverse expressions, including *Zapin*, *Jipin*, *Jepin*, *Japin*, *Dana*, *Dincak*, and *Dambus*.

Through this joint effort, the participating nations will strengthen ties by sharing cultural knowledge and expertise among practitioners, researchers, and communities. Future plans include grassroots collaborations such as joint performances, workshops, youth exchanges, and regional festivals. Ultimately, these initiatives aim to safeguard the living tradition of *Zapin*, ensuring its vitality for future generations while deepening regional friendship and cultural solidarity.

Community Participation

The nomination is driven by close partnerships with the communities, groups, and practitioners who actively safeguard, practice, and transmit the *Zapin* tradition. This collective spirit is beautifully reflected in the concept of *Ummah* (community or nation), a shared cultural identity that transcends geographical, ethnic, and national borders.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture remains deeply committed to a participatory process, ensuring the community's voice is at the center of the bid. Broad stakeholder consultations are underway, actively gathering the continuous consent and support of local cultural practitioners. This joint effort honours their desire to share this living heritage with the global stage via UNESCO.

"This nomination is not about asserting ownership, intellectual property rights, or cultural exclusivity," stated the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture. "Rather, it is about safeguarding a shared living heritage that has flourished across generations. Our goal is to ensure the knowledge, skills, and values embodied in Zapin continue to be passed down from master practitioners to the youth."

Educational Integration and the Way Forward

In Malaysia, sustained efforts to safeguard *Zapin* are integrated across formal education and university curricula, youth training programs, and community

workshops. These are further supported by academic research, cultural festivals, and digital documentation across social media platforms.

Aligned with the aspirations of Malaysia MADANI, these initiatives foster cultural sustainability, empower communities, and nurture future generations. By joining this multinational UNESCO nomination, **Malaysia aims to elevate the international visibility of *Zapin* while protecting it against misappropriation, firmly upholding the core MADANI values of inclusivity, respect for cultural diversity, and shared prosperity.**

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE (MOTAC)
24 SEPTEMBER 2026

Issued by:

Corporate Communications Unit
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE (MOTAC)
Tel : 03-8891 7197 | Fax : 03-8891 7181
Website : www.motac.gov.my | Email : group.ukk@motac.gov.my
Social Media - Facebook, Instagram, X & TikTok : @mymotac

